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STATINTL

Why the U-2 Lowered U.S. Prestige

Foreign Relations Committee Head Gives Senate His Own Analysis

From a speech by
Senator J. W. Fulbright

I believe the prestige and influence of our country in the affairs of nations have reached a low low and I believe that before we can begin to regain our position in the world we must admit our errors, examine the causes thereof, then carefully plan and execute a program for the restoration of that power and influence.

It was a serious error of judgment to order the U-2 flight of May 1. It is true, of course, as Administration spokesmen have repeatedly said,

The Mirror of Public Opinion

that there is no good time for a failure. But to say this is to overlook the fact that there are bad times and worse times. Little

or no consideration was given to the international consequences of a failure on May 1.

We are told that this particular flight was in a special category, that it was after information of extraordinary importance which might not be available to us. But we are not told, even under conditions of the utmost secrecy, what that information was.

In view of the sensitivity of some of the other things we were told, this reticence on the part of the Executive Branch raises the question of whether the information sought on May 1 was in fact as important as it has been represented. There is ground here for the conclusion that the alleged extraordinary importance of this information is the Administration's cover story for its own costly mistake.

Three Points of Failure

To set jaws by the few jaws—
Piranha and Jaguar
Columbus' huckstering breath
Blew inward through North America

Killing the last of the mammoths.
The right maps have no monsters.
Now the mind's wandering elementals,
Ousted from their traveller-told

Unapproachable islands,
From their heavens and their burning underworld,
Wait daily at the traffic crossing,
Or lean over headlines, taking nothing in.



—Herb Lubner in The Washington Post.

"Let's Not Blame Ourselves for What's Done by Those Darn Rocks."

flights in terms which implied their continuation. These are interrelated and each served to compound the mischievous effects of the other.

As is pointed out in the report, it is unprecedented among civilized nations for a chief of state to assume personal responsibility for covert intelligence operations. The traditional method would have been to allow the chief of the intelligence agency to take the responsibility. One reason intelligence agencies exist is to serve as a whipping boy in cases of this kind.

It is begging the question to say that the sovereignty of nations is violated all the time by espionage and that the Soviet Union is the worst offender. The violations of this type, as carried out by the covert intelligence activities of any nation state are in

in his choice of language, it is difficult to see how anyone could have been expected to act substantially different from the way Chairman Khrushchev acted under the circumstances which confronted him in Paris.

Although it was bad enough for our chief of state to assume personal responsibility for the U-2, it was worse for us then to leave the impression that the flights were to be continued and, even more, to go to such lengths to justify the flights.

I suppose that this statement will be twisted to have me saying that we must be nice to the Russians and to Khrushchev and not offend him.

The truth is that in the orderly conduct of international relations, one ought not to be either nice or offensive; one ought to be impersonal and objective. Heaven knows our basic differences of substance with the Soviet Union make the conduct of our relations difficult enough without our creating novel obstructions to the traditional means of communication and negotiation.

But a larger, and rather more elusive, issue is also involved here. It is one thing to say "We tried to get intelligence because we needed it." It is quite another thing to say "We needed intelligence and this gave us the right to try to get it."

Growth and Hammer

If a man is starving to death and he robs a grocery store, we can understand his action on the basis of need; but his need does not give him a right to become a burglar.

It contributes little to our understanding of these events to say Khrushchev wrecked the conference. Of course he did. The essential point is that the U-2 was the reason he did.

...the direction is not the machinery which is at fault so much as the people who operate it.

The need for co-ordination varies inversely with the strength and vigor of leadership. Elaborate arrangements for co-ordination are really nothing more than a poor substitute for a hand directing affairs. It is the difference between making a hurried phone call to Gettysburg for approval of a co-ordinated position and receiving clear instructions based upon reflective consideration from the White House.